



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
TO THE OSCE, UN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

ENGLISH only

**Statement made by H.E. Neven Madey, Ambassador of Croatia
At the 748th Meeting of the Permanent Council
29 January 2009**

Madame Chairperson,

On behalf of the Croatian delegation I would like to extend our warmest regards to the distinguished Minister of the Czech Republic, country holding the Presidency of EU but also a friendly State with which our human contacts and relationship throughout the history have established a permanent bond.

The priorities of the Czech Presidency are seen in Croatia as well selected, urgent and demanding very serious response in view of prevailing global economic difficulties, energy supply insecurities and call for the change also in dealing with political challenges and strengthening of the Transatlantic relations.

We have already aligned ourselves with the approach and activities that the EU has initiated in respect to the position expressed by our distinguish Greek Chairmanship in Office and we shall be guided by them in our activities.

As the candidate country for the membership of the EU, in the process which is hopefully approaching its final stages by the end of 2009 and looking forward to its membership (along with Albania) of NATO at the forthcoming Summit in April, Croatia will deal with these issues as a constructive and reliable partner, strengthening stability and co-operation in the entire OSCE area and more specifically in its neighboring region of South East Europe.

We would like to thank the Czech Presidency for the priority it attaches in supporting Croatian and Turkish EU accession talks. Croatia continues to fulfill all the obligations related to the negotiation process and hopes that the existing impediments will be successfully overcome in order to ensure conclusion of the talks, acknowledging the *Road map for reaching the final stage of accession negotiations in 2009*.

Your intention to deal as a matter of priority, with the policy of integration of the countries of Western Balkans is an important investment in the stability of the region and more widely of the European continent. Enlargement, even with the visible signs of fatigue among some member states and its public, is the only viable answer to still present challenges and problems in this region. It is in the interest of the countries concerned but it also corresponds to the basic strategic goals of the EU.

The way forward to create the future in the countries of this region which in Europe (now of 27) has brought visible and unprecedented results is the only answer to their aspirations, these aspirations being individual but hopeful that the further progress will be achieved this year, during the Czech and Swedish Presidency.

We fully support the European perspective of the SEE countries depending on their fulfillment of the established criteria. We co-operate with them on a wide range of issues such as sharing knowledge and expertise on integration processes.

Croatia supports the strengthening of the EU's role in Bosnia and Herzegovina, advocating a careful transition from OHR to EUSR (Special Representative) which would depend on strict implementation of the transition criteria and acknowledge realities on the ground, including the potential security threat of inter-ethnic tensions and other challenges which are reason for concern in some parts of international community.

Croatia actively promotes security in the region *inter alia* by participating in the EULEX Mission in Kosovo.

Madame Chairperson,

The other priority refers to the OSCE and the future of European security. Sometimes the picture of OSCE may look bleak but we should not forget that this Organization was an important instrument in bringing tectonic changes in Europe – changes that brought stability and prosperity to countries and millions of people across the old dividing lines. And now – even when complaints of the existence of lack of confidence and the need to set new priorities our Organization remains the forum for such discussions and also possesses the arsenal of approaches and activities that can lead us further. We have to recommit ourselves to the core principles and values within the comprehensive, three-dimensional European security.

Croatia is looking forward to further constructive discussions hoping that emerging proposals and ideas will lead to the strengthening of our Organization and to consolidation of peace, stability and co-operation in our area.

The Organization cannot afford to leave the vacuum in the presence of its field missions in Georgia – the country whose territorial integrity and sovereignty we strongly support. Both the Finish and Greek Chairmanships have searched for an innovative approach to secure the presence of OSCE, its military monitors and civilian staff that is badly needed. This is the reality that should be matched urgently and opportunity should not be missed.

We wish the Czech Presidency, to you Mr. Minister and to our colleague Ivan Počuch a productive and rewarding term of office.

Thank you.